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SUBJECT: ASSISTANT SECRETARY CARSON,S PARTICIPATION IN THE
CONTACT GROUP ON SOMALIA - SEPTEMBER 23, 2009

¶1. (U) September 23, 2009; 3:00 p.m.; New York, NY.

¶2. (U) Participants:

U.S.

AF Assistant Secretary Johnnie Carson
AF Deputy Assistant Secretary Karl Wycoff
Acting Assistant Administrator at USAID Earl Gast
Somalia Desk Officer Matthew Walsh (Notetaker)

CONTACT GROUP COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

Burundi
Ethiopia
European Commission
France
Germany
Italy
Japan
Kenya
League of Arab States
Norway
Organization of the Islamic Conference
Russian Federation
Somalia
Spain
Uganda
United Nations
United Kingdom
Yemen

¶3. (SBU) SUMMARY. African Affairs Assistant Secretary (A/S) Johnnie Carson represented the United States at this brief meeting of the International Contact Group (ICG) on Somalia on the margins of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).

Although many countries and organizations sent higher-level representation than at previous ICG meetings, the members did not agree to concrete next steps. Instead, delegations delivered short interventions on the current situation in Somalia, the need for direct bilateral support for Somalia,s Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), and the need to create a UN Somalia country team presence in Mogadishu. Members unanimously condemned the September 17 suicide bombings in Mogadishu. END SUMMARY.

Opening Remarks

¶4. (U) UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) for Somalia Ahmedou Ould-Abdullah opened the meeting

as chair and quickly asked UN Under Secretary-General (USYG) for the Department of Political Affairs Lynn Pascoe to speak.

Pascoe thanked those states that provided support to the TFG and/or AMISOM and opined that if the TFG fails, the whole world will suffer, not just Somalia. He thanked Uganda and Burundi for their troop contributions to AMISOM and called on more countries to shoulder the burden.⁸ Pascoe noted that while the TFG is Somalia's best chance in almost twenty years for stability, Somalis and the international community have a lot of work to do.

15. (U) As former co-chairs of the ICG, the SRSG asked Norway and the U.S. to deliver brief opening remarks. Norway Foreign Minister (ForMin) Jonas Gahr Store noted that the international community's focus on Somalia must be a long-term engagement since the challenges on the ground "are enormous and unique." A/S Carson underscored continued U.S. support for the TFG and AMISOM, encouraged other members to support both entities directly and urgently, and highlighted that the U.S. remains committed to addressing the dire humanitarian situation in Somalia.

16. (U) TFG ForMin Ali Jama Jangeli spoke for the first time in front of the ICG, having been appointed ForMin just last month. Jangeli highlighted the TFG's ongoing efforts in the area of political reconciliation, noting that the TFG continues to "seek and accommodate those with national political agendas, while those with other global agendas have no place" in the TFG. Jangeli also asked members to focus on the implementation of the next steps listed in the communiqué from the ICG meeting held in Rome in June. These include: strengthening and expanding the TFG's security forces and AMISOM; responding to the humanitarian emergency; putting pressure on outside spoilers; and finding "better mechanisms for donor funding, as the current methods are not working." Jangeli also asked that the ICG explore how to move the UN Somalia country team from Nairobi to Mogadishu and look at the issue of impunity more seriously.

17. (U) Kenya and Italy delivered opening statements, as the SRSG held this ICG meeting at the two countries, urging. Kenya Prime Minister Raila Odinga expressed his support for the TFG and asked other countries to take on a greater share of the burden resulting from Somalia's troubles. Odinga noted the security threat posed by Kenya's close proximity to Somalia and Kenya's hosting of hundreds-of-thousands of Somali refugees, and highlighted Kenya's cooperation in taking dozens of suspected Somali pirates into its judicial system. Italy ForMin Franco Fratinni underscored that if the world is going to take the ICG seriously, then ICG members need to disburse the funds they pledged at the April donors conference in Brussels promptly. He also encouraged discussion of AMISOM's mandate, highlighted the need for demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration programs, and announced that Italy is ready to disburse more funding to the TFG and/or AMISOM. Fratinni did not provide any details on this potential funding.

Support for the TFG and AMISOM

18. (U) UN USYG for the Department of Field Support (DFS) Susana Malcorra spoke about DFS's efforts, through the UN Support Office for AMISOM (UNSOA), to bring AMISOM up to UN peacekeeping operation standards. According to Malcorra, AMISOM is almost at 100 percent.⁸ She highlighted that UNSOA is now providing full food rations to AMISOM, a medical evacuation system is in place, UNSOA sent three shipments of equipment to Mogadishu, and in two weeks UNSOA will begin providing fuel for AMISOM. Malcorra said DFS priorities moving forward are to secure the supply line from Mombasa, Kenya, to Mogadishu, and to enable UNSOA to oversee more UN personnel and resources in Mogadishu so the UN can begin planning for the construction of a headquarters (HQ) for Somalia in Mogadishu.

19. (U) At numerous times throughout the meeting, SRSG

Ould-Abdullah called on members to support the TFG with direct, bilateral contributions, vice contributions to the TFG or AMISOM trust funds set up under UN auspices. Various delegations echoed this call, including the U.S. and Italy, but the ICG made no new concrete pledges. Germany did announce that its long-talked-about effort to fund the Government of Ethiopia to train 1,000 TFG police officers in Ethiopia will start on October 1. France announced that 150 TFG troops it is training in Djibouti will be ready to return to Mogadishu in a matter of weeks.⁸

UN Somalia Country Team Presence in Mogadishu

¶10. (SBU) SRSO Ould-Abdullah, USYGs Pascoe and Malcorra, Norway and Italy all called for the UN to establish some level of permanent representation in Mogadishu. These statements ranged from Norway asking for the establishment of a UNHQ in Mogadishu and the movement of the UN Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS) from Nairobi to Mogadishu; to USYG Malcorra noting the need for a UNHQ in Mogadishu; to USYG Pascoe noting the need for UN presence in Mogadishu. Beyond these brief mentions, the issue did not generate any debate, nor did it result in any next steps.

Condemnation of the September 17 Suicide Bombings

¶11. (U) Starting with USYG Pascoe, almost every speaker at the meeting condemned the September 17 suicide bombings in Mogadishu that killed 21 AMISOM peacekeepers and Somalis. A/S Carson stated, "The United States joins our international partners in our condemnation of the strongest possible terms of the terrorist attacks in Mogadishu on September 17. We pay tribute to the brave soldiers who lost their lives in that attack by continuing our pursuit of peace in Somalia. We recognize the incredible work the African Union is doing through AMISOM (The brave Ugandan and Burundian personnel in AMISOM deserve our support and praise for their immeasurable contribution).⁸

COMMENT

¶12. (SBU) While this meeting of the ICG on Somalia did draw some welcome high-level attention from Italy, Kenya and Yemen, the discussion did not produce any concrete steps for moving forward or generate any significant pledges of support for the TFG or AMISOM. The creation of a forum that would bring together current donors to Somalia, as well as realistic potential donors, seems even more pressing if we hope to discuss international coordination and assistance for the TFG and AMISOM productively. Yemen ForMin Dr. Abu Bakr Al-Qirbi summarized this thought very succinctly at the meeting when he commented that Yemen's representatives at previous ICG meetings always reported, "The meeting went very well." However, in reality, the ForMin noted, the ICG meetings are not producing much in the way of concrete results that advance the Djibouti Peace Process. END COMMENT.
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